

Harmony EDA Minutes

February 7, 2019
7:30 AM

Council Room
Community Center

Present: Chris Skaalen, Steve Donney, and Andy Batstone

Also Present: Roxanne Johnson, Kelsey Bergey, Patrick McNalley (CWS), Becky Hoff, Jerome Illg, and Chris Giesen

The regular meeting was called to order at 7:34 AM by Chris Skaalen

Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting. Motion by Donney, second by Batstone to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports & Claims

The status of the loan portfolio and new home rebate program were reviewed. All loans were current. Donney asked if the total monthly payment for each loan could be added to the loan schedule. Illg said he would add the information. Motion by Skaalen, second by Donney to approve the financial report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Experience Harmony Projects/Goals

Giesen presented a tentative outline on the proposed solar energy informational community workshop. The board reviewed and discussed at length. Donney was concerned that solar energy use will eventually cause financial stress on the current city electric financial model; that with less users on the system the remaining users would have to pay the difference for infrastructure. Illg mentioned that the current law requires the city to accommodate anyone that wants to utilize solar, provided zoning regulations are met. And additionally, those wishing to utilize solar would also have to pay for any electric infrastructure upgrades needed to allow excess energy created back to the electric grid. Skaalen asked if the concerns Donney raised were considered when the council created the ordinance and that his particular concern might not be in the EDA's realm of review. Skaalen noted that this was an issue many members of the community supported and provided input on through the Experience Harmony project. Consensus was that this question should be resolved by the city council before additional EDA time was spent on the project.

Patrick McNally from the firm CWS was present to discuss a quote for digital marketing. Giesen explained that the digital marketing would be a way for the board to push out the community marketing video on platforms like social media and on website advertising. He also explained that if the EDA partnered with the Chamber of Commerce, CWS would give a break on their administrative fee. CWS would create a digital marketing strategy, launch, manage, and report on the results at a cost of \$1,825 for a three month plan, plus the admin fee of \$1,350 which could be split with the Chamber of Commerce. The board discussed and asked several questions to clarify how the ads would be structured. It was explained that a strategy would be created to target a specific audience utilizing certain keywords and locations and that the advertising dollars would be throttled so that the dollars would more or less evenly fund ads over a three month period. Giesen said that this would be a bit of an experiment to see what works best and that additional or less advertising could be purchased in subsequent phases or years.

Motion by Donney, second by Batstone to accept the proposal for services as offered, requesting that for simplicity the Chamber of Commerce sign the contract with the vendor and the EDA would reimburse the Chamber accordingly. Motion carried unanimously.

Harmony Real Estate Trends Update

Roxanne Johnson and Kelsey Bergey were present to discuss the past year's trends in the local real estate market. Giesen told the board that the two volunteered again to provide this information and insight and that the information had been very helpful in past years. Johnson and Bergey discussed the overall trends in the market noting that twenty three properties sold in Harmony in 2018. Only four of those sales were people moving from Harmony to another location in Harmony. Five were people moving from Preston to Harmony. This was compared to 195 residential sales in Fillmore County. It was reported that the average days on market in 2018 went down by about half from the prior year which meant properties were selling quickly. The average sale price was \$104,000. Johnson and Bergey strongly advised the board to promote the community's options for internet service and to incent owners of empty buildings to bring new life to vacant storefronts.

Chamber of Commerce Report

Becky Hoff was present to give the Chamber report. She said that in addition to finishing the visitors guide, the Chamber was working on their website refresh and tourism video. She was also planning the 2019 annual meeting which will be held at 6:30 on February 19, 2019 at the Harmony Golf Course; board members are welcome.

Prospects/Community Update

Giesen reported that he and Illg were still working with Dairyland Power Cooperative on the industrial park project and that they have requested information on the prospect's conceptual construction plans to assist with determining the ultimate cost the prospect might have for any required public infrastructure. They will utilize the project's future estimated taxable value to determine how much tax increment financing might be available to offset project costs.

Giesen reminded the board that the annual joint city and school board meeting would be held at 5:30 PM on March 12, 2019 at the community center in Harmony to discuss projects and possible collaboration. Skaalen asked that Giesen utilize the 2019 annual report and the Experience Harmony II goals for the EDA's portion of the meeting.

Skaalen, Donney, Illg, and Giesen reported on the recent visit to the Capitol to thank local legislators for their work on the bike trail project. The city gifted new Harmonyopoly games to the legislators and the Governor so that they can have something Harmony related in their offices when they receive visitors. It was said the trip was very successful.

Giesen reported that there was no new news on the bike trail project or city monument sign project and gave the monthly CEDA grant bulletin report. He also mentioned that he was working with two potential loan applicants that might be ready to make a request at the March meeting.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Hearing no objections, Skaalen adjourned the meeting at 9:23 AM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2019 at 7:30 AM, at the Community Center.